

# Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

## On the Frontlines of the Climate Emergency

### Key Points

- Climate change poses a significant threat to the sustainable development and societal well-being of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
- Adaptation and mitigation measures must be scaled up significantly to ensure long-term water security and disaster risk reduction of SIDS.
- Accessing finance for climate resilience is one of the key challenges. Many SIDS experience significant shortfalls in investment needed to build resilient infrastructure and strengthen capacity for adaptation and resilience building.
- Adaptation efforts informed by community, indigenous and traditional knowledge are essential for enhancing resilience.

### The Importance of Adaptation in SIDS

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- Due to their unique geographies, small land areas, heavily weather-dependent economies, and high exposure to natural hazards, SIDS are on the front lines of climate change – suffering significantly from extreme weather events and rising sea-levels;
- Access to freshwater and water security are particularly challenging – owing to increasing drought incidences, over extraction of groundwater, salinization of aquifers resulting from sea level rise as well as discharge of untreated wastewater.
- Combined impacts of climate change and environmental degradation (including loss of biodiversity and plastic pollution) are exacerbating threats on essential livelihoods such as fishing and tourism.
- Limited technical and financial capacity in the public sector is common amongst SIDS, resulting in low adaptive capacity to cope with rising climate impacts.
- Remoteness of the SIDS mean that they are more susceptible to global supply chain disruption from climate change induced risks.
- As climate change is having very real impacts in SIDS today, adaptation is a present-day necessity for survival.

### Key Policy Recommendations

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- SIDS cannot address the issue of climate change alone. There is a strong case of climate justice and global solidarity especially as SIDS have contributed less than 1% of total GHG emissions.
- Ramping up and enabling access to climate finance through innovative measures are urgent. This could be accomplished by establishing a special and focused investment

vehicle - similar to GCA's Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program – to mobilize and scale climate adaptation finance in SIDS.

- Mainstreaming climate adaptive water security measures into NDCs and NAPs is essential for enhancing local and national resilience; public investments should be aligned accordingly.
- Nature-based solutions (NBS) can strengthen the climate resilience of SIDS while offering wider development benefits by boosting natural capital, enhancing ecosystem services and providing livelihood opportunities such as fisheries and eco-tourism.
- Support is needed to downscale the understanding of climate risks and building capacity in SIDS. IPDC can facilitate options around knowledge sharing and capacity building.

*This briefing is derived from a series of webinars, meetings, and dialogues with water practitioners across the globe, who are part of the Water Adaptation Community, hosted by the Global Center on Adaptation. It is intended to advance engagement and facilitate knowledge sharing on the subject of water adaptation.*

*GCA would like to acknowledge and thank the members of the Water Adaptation Community for contributing their perspectives to this community-sourced briefing, which may not necessarily represent those of GCA.*

## Additional Resources and Further Reading

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- [Blog: Hulhumalé, Maldives: Monumental climate adaptation effort raises hope in a threatened paradise](#)
- Open access Paper: Disaster risk water security challenges and strategies in small island developing states [Water | Free Full-Text | Disaster-Risk, Water Security Challenges and Strategies in Small Island Developing States \(SIDS\) \(mdpi.com\)](#)
- Policy brief on the same (Disaster risk water security challenges): [Policy-Brief\\_Issue06.pdf \(unu.edu\)](#)
- Socio-metabolic risk and tipping points on islands: [Socio-metabolic risk and tipping points on islands - IOPscience](#)